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Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, D. C. 20554

In the matter of WT Docket no. 98-143, RM-9148, RM9150, RM-9196

The purpose of this comment is to assist the FCC in regulating the amateur service in such a manner that it will help future generations of amateurs as it has helped me. To accomplish this, I will first provide a background example of my qualifications to comment.

### **BACKGROUND**

In 1956, my parents allowed me to take my first examination for a ham radio license. Before that time I listened to ham nets where messages were passed, and sometimes people in flooded areas got into rowboats to read the flood gages in the middle of the night. I have received some certificates over the years for this type of work, but that is not the primary benefit I have received.

I am one of the success stories from ham radio. Because of wanting to become a ham, I read all the technical books I could find in the library after school. When I entered the Air Force, I took a bypass test for electronics fundamentals and was made an instructor in Electronics fundamentals.

A more important aspect of the hobby to me was the emotional support it provided during times of emotional stress. When told that my wife had less than 6 months to live (in 1970) and being laid off at work, my self-esteem was crushed, but the nets let me have my turn, and on the air, I was as good as everyone else. Today I see something similar happening in a cartoon "They can't tell you are a dog on the Internet".

The difference is that with radio there is a pride in being able to have a station you create or assemble and your operator skill involved. Also the callsign makes each amateur unique in the world.

I hold the Extra class Amateur radio License W5THT.

I also hold Second-Class Radiotelegraph and General Radiotelephone (formerly first class) licenses.

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## **EMERGENCY SERVICE**

In paragraph 9 of your MPRM you state that the rules are designed to provide emergency communications.

While the commercial communications companies have created reliable hardware, the operators of most of these systems have no training or interest in repairing them. Recent advances have created “magic boxes” that law enforcement and public service agencies rely upon for communications. In normal times and localized emergencies, these systems do what they were created to do.

In case of EMP or a Meteor Shower the commercial satellites may fail, and when the San Andreas Fault lets go, it may also trigger the New Madrid Fault, cutting the power grid in the middle of the country and on the west coast. The resulting earthquakes will bring down towers, rendering the digital radios (which depend on the towers) useless.

The ability to throw a wire over a tree limb and communicate must continue. This approach violates the training of today’s “board swapper” technicians, and only exists in the older amateur radio community.

The amateur radio community in the past knew that emergency service was expected as a social duty (social cost of having the license). Today the newer hams are do not seem to have the awareness of anything not specifically covered in the V-E testing.

I submit that, whichever licensing classes are adopted, at least one question on each test should deal with the requirement to aid in emergency communications. (Commercial communications companies are required to carry emergency messages at no charge, so it logically follows that someone unwilling to help has no justification for holding an amateur radio license).

A second question should deal with the technical means to perform emergency communications.

A third should address the need for disciplined written-format message handling to support an emergency.

The FCC itself should address the communications policy questions, such as how an official of an agency needing emergency communications can contact the local hams for help, and which agencies have priority. This information should be in the amateur training literature.

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### **CW**

It was very hard for me to learn the code. It took several months to be able to write 5 WPM for the Novice, and a long time to upgrade to 13 WPM, years later 20 WPM was passed on a good day when my coordination was cooperating.

But, when things were emotionally the worst, and I just needed to talk to someone who knew nothing about my troubles - about something other than my troubles, CW was there, because the old junk thing nobody would buy from me still put out a CW signal.

It is the ability to take a handful of parts from an old TV set and a key and send CW at almost no cost that opens the communications channel for anyone with reading skills and the enough desire to communicate that they learn the code.

There should be no restriction of the ability of an amateur to create and operate his own CW equipment as long as it meets reasonable emissions purity requirements.

Examinees with disabilities wishing to operate CW should pass the test using the method they will use to communicate on CW (computer, blow in tube, etc).

Please do not make CW useless, in a nursing home with micropower it may be my only way to communicate.

### **NOVICE CLASS**

The Novice license serves a social purpose and should be retained, even if the code is an add-on step as it seems to have become. The term “technician” does not indicate the low level of skills of the average (“read these questions and remember them for a few hours”) entry level ham.

Technician should be renamed Novice and Technician Plus should be renamed (something suitable).

I really believe that 5WPM is enough for the entry level license. I also believe that the “bottom 25 kc” now reserved for the extra class license serves a good purpose. Allowing novices to use the full CW portions of the bands (above the bottom 25kc) would do no harm, but the rules should state that the purpose of the power limit is to minimize possible harm until they learn more and advance.

### **VOLUNTEER EXAMINERS**

I am a Volunteer Examiner.

Creation of the tests should be done by older experienced amateurs. I believe that the creation of the tests should be left to professional educators employed by the VEC or to Extra class amateurs (whatever the new designation of that class may be).

A qualified teacher should be allowed to administer any test he or she has passed, and Extra class hams should be qualified to administer all tests.

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## **ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURES**

I believe that the amateur community should be self-policing. Even if we do have the chance to switch to another frequency if something offends us, there are young family members to consider. Currently there are many abuses which can be cured easily by a letter or personal meeting between the offending ham and the local community. However fear of transgressing "Harassment" laws inhibit the average ham from doing his part to self-police the service.

I submit that if the FCC provided an approved (advisory not accusatory) form where the legal boilerplate language was provided and the observers only had to fill in the date, time, and nature of the offending incident, and the FCC would record and forward it (by mail) most enforcement problems would go away.

I also believe that a required test question should cover the need to observe certain standards of decency as a prerequisite to obtaining an amateur radio license.

## **SPACE OPERATION**

The current rules require an extra class license to operate or control a station from space. There currently exists a trophy for the first contact with Mars.

The rules as I read them are only for orbiting space vehicles. They require at least a 3-year lead time to get approvals.

The recent flight of John Glenn with very short lead time illustrates the need to revise these rules. The sputnik hand-launched from MIR also illustrates the ability to launch with a relatively short lead time.

I propose that any spacecraft carrying amateur radio for experimental purposes such as a one-way repeater to the moon or Mars, or a short-lived hand-launched experiment be exempt from these rules. The result of this is that an amateur satellite could substitute for a failed secondary payload on an available rocket on short notice. It would also allow the launch of one-way probes without the need for the cost of the entire NASA command network to be able to turn them off.

There is still much to be learned, just as "200 meters and down" was once considered useless for terrestrial communication, 200 meters and up may be usable for interplanetary communication. Without the ability to test, we won't know.

Thank you for your kind attention.